

My name is Wanda White. I am a registered nurse and am currently employed as the Health Manager for RMDC, Head Start. We are licensed day care sites with 235 3 and 4 year olds enrolled. Being licensed in the State of MT as a day care means that our 235 children need to be immunized as is recommended by the Centers of Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Immunizations are our cultures safety net to diseases that are preventable.

HB 227 is confusing to say the least. Medical exemptions for immunizations is a given. I do not know of a medical professional who would insist that a child with a medical history that causes the child any compromise would give or allow another medical professional to give vaccine to that child. They would truly not be professional and would, and rightly so, have to answer to those consequences. It is just a non-issue, and honestly, I have not heard of a case like that in my 30 plus years of nursing.

Also, there is already in existence religious exemption for one of the childhood vaccines. I have seen a few issues regarding this, but have never seen it become anything noteworthy. If a persons religious belief is overpoweringly compelling, well that is the reason we have a constitution and we all understand and are proud of our religious rights. Removing the 'criminal' sanction for falsely claiming a religious exemption, that is fine. I think we can trust that parents claiming religious exemption are honest and feel strongly about that particular vaccine and should not be labeled 'criminals' for their beliefs. After all they are parents and surely want the very best life for their child. I also have NOT in my 30-plus years in nursing ever have heard of a case that went all the way to 'criminality'.

In our licensed day care program, we pride ourselves on keeping our 235 children safe and healthy. We work steadfastly to maintain that environment. Our children, for the most part, have all been given protection from disease by having been given vaccines for preventable diseases during their regular checks with their medical home at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months and between one year of age and 15 months. They, for the most part, have antigens that protect them already circulating.

That said, viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine-preventable disease and death still exist and can be passed on to unprotected persons or imported from other countries. In 2008 the measles outbreak resulted in deaths, so it is not just ancient history—that is recent history! Diseases such as measles, mumps or pertussis (whooping cough) can be more severe than often assumed and can result in social and economic as well as physical costs: sick children miss school, parents lose time from work, and illness among health care providers can severely disrupt the healthcare system. I know for certain an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease in our day care of 235 children would spell disaster for every entity involved. For many of these diseases, without vaccination, the incidence will rise to prevaccine levels. That does not seem like an acceptable solution, even with high religious convictions. Please listen to the professionals and do not pass **HB227** as presented.